

**VYBZING Youth Forum - Youth and Road Safety: Save a Life, Save a Future**

**ANNUAL MEETING OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK – VYBZING Presentation**

**THURSDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2013**

**Safiya Charlemagne**

Mr. Chairman, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Honourable Dr. Kenny D. Anthony  
Cabinet Ministers of the Government of Saint Lucia  
Distinguished Governors of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)  
Members of the Board of Directors of CDB  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Observers  
Guests  
Management and Staff of the CDB  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is now the practice that as part of the Annual Board of Governors' Meeting of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), a Youth Challenge and Youth Forum for Development are mounted involving young people between the ages of 16-29 from the host country where the Meeting is being held. This programme has been named *VYBZING* in keeping with its goal of creating an environment for dialogue. *VYBZING* is a platform for youth engagement with emphasis on youth empowerment and participation in the development process. It facilitates communication among youth and with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) on social and economic development issues and challenges that are impacting their lives.

Last week on May 15-17, representatives of the youth of St. Lucia participated in the *VYBZING* St. Lucia Youth Forum on the theme of "Youth and Road Safety: Save a Life Save a Future" which was organized by the Caribbean Development Bank and the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports.

Specific objectives of the forum were to:

- Increase young people's understanding of the road safety crisis, particularly youth issues
- Inspire and motivate young people to become actively involved in preventing road traffic injuries
- Build young people's knowledge and develop the skills needed to implement their own community-based road safety projects

**Ezra Small**

The facilitators from Youth for Road Safety (YOURS), a global not-profit and non-governmental organization for youth and road safety led us in interactive discussions, exercises and presentations on road safety. With presentations made by Caribbean Development Bank project officers and St. Lucia's Chief Transport Officer, we were led into deliberations on the following matters:

- Road traffic injuries is the leading cause of death among young people 15 – 29 years old and kills more people than HIV / AIDS or Malaria worldwide
- In Saint Lucia, crashes claim the lives of 14.1% per 100,000 – this is relatively high as the rate of crash related deaths are higher in low to middle-income countries and is expected to rise.
- It is estimated that by 2015, car crashes will be the fifth leading cause of death worldwide.
- Sadly the statistics show, that 67% of crash related deaths are among youth between ages 15 and 35, and 73% of those are young males.
- The figures are even more alarming when it comes to the quantitative and qualitative impact on countries such as ours.

- Crash related deaths have a major negative impact on families and individuals hindering progress in our public and private sector. We lose service men, skilled individuals, educated graduates and promising citizens.
- The cost of medical and psychiatric treatment of trauma victims may amount to more than US \$30,000, which is more than the total funds received in aid in official development assistance to the country

The good news is that we can avoid most of the car crashes, if we implement proper infrastructure and effective awareness and education programs for the youth of our country.

The focus of this workshop was not only to highlight the statistics and provide education but also to equip participants with project management skills in implementing a road safety project. This included identification, planning, implementing and evaluation skills. There is much more that we can do, now that we have the wheels turning.

Internationally, the United Nations' has adopted the Decade of Action for Road Safety, for the years 2011-2020. Its goal is to stabilize and reduce the forecast level of road traffic deaths around the world. It is estimated that 5 millions lives could be saved on the world's roads during the Decade. Globally, various countries have already signed on and now we are recommending that St. Lucia part be part of this global action. Not just for the now but for future generations.

The future we want needs to include a road safety strategy. As quoted by a family member of a road fatality, "the value of a human being cannot be quantified with figures." From a Saint Lucian perspective, of those who are left to pick up the never-ending trail of pieces, we do not anticipate or favour a repeat of the Morne Sion tragedy.

We applaud the efforts of the Caribbean Development Bank and its partners in facilitating this workshop and engaging young people. We look forward to participating in the youth-led community-based Road Safety project over the next year which will be designed, implemented and evaluated by a project team consisting of young people from Saint Lucia. CDB and the Ministry of Infrastructure, Port Services and Transport have made commitments to support this initiative. We, the young people of St. Lucia, welcome and appreciate this opportunity to increase youth engagement and participation in community development as well as support social partnerships between youth, government ministries and CDB.

Finally, VYBZING gives us a Voice and with this Voice we have developed a Youth Declaration on Road Safety.....